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ABSTRACT

An evaluative review of the Polyvalent Adult Education Centre in Bombay, India, is presented. Objectives of the evaluation include: (1) to assess the extent and type of planning undertaken by the Vidyapeeth in developing a polyvalent approach; and (2) to assess the extent of benefit obtained by the participants. Planning for a course of training began with identification of training needs. The courses devised were largely "non-technical" in nature. An analysis of the planning process with respect to the ten courses offered shows that where the courses were conceived of by the Vidyapeeth the cooperative agencies assumed on the whole a relatively passive role. In the planning stage, several factors were taken into account: (1) the level of the trainee, (2) the relationship of the syllabus to the life conditions of the trainee, and (3) a minimum size for the sub-units of a course. The assessment revealed that about half the courses were reasonably well organized and the other half were poorly organized. More careful planning is recommended. (CK)

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AGENDA PAPER No. I-A

ASIAN REGIONAL SEMINAR
ON
POLYVALENT ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE

THE SHRAMIK VIDYAPEETH:
AN EVALUATIVE STUDY OF A POLYVALENT CENTRE

organised by

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
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I

THE BACKGROUND

The Shramik Vidyapeeth,* Bombay was established formally in the middle of 1967, but the idea of the Vidyapeeth had been discussed, explored and negotiated successively between the UNESCO and the Government of India, the Government and the National Council of Educational Research & Training, and between the NCERT and the Bombay City Social Education Committee for almost a year preceding the establishment of the Vidyapeeth. The idea, on which the Vidyapeeth was established, has been referred to by the use of the term 'polyvalent' education. The Vidyapeeth was expected to serve as a centre for polyvalent education.

The special characteristics of the programme organized by the Vidyapeeth would be—

i) their polyvalent approach—aimed at the total life of the worker
ii) their part-time character—aimed at providing education to those in employment
iii) their utilization of expertise in the community through the nucleus of a small full-time staff
iv) their effort to develop special courses to meet needs of particular groups—at their level of education and related to their work environment, and
v) the involvement of workers' organizations and employers in course formulation and course organization.

The Shramik Vidyapeeth was not visualized as a large plant with its own full-time staff and heavy capital equipment. It was more a nucleus of competent organizers, with an educational goal, who could mobilize community talent and community resources to meet the training and education needs of the workers in factories, offices and homes. If this concept could be implemented it would not only ensure operational economy but also help achieve a level of community involvement and awareness that would yield many other intangible benefits.

II

SCOPE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

During the year 1968 when the Shramik Vidyapeeth had been in operation for a little over a year, the UNESCO felt that it would be useful

* Shramik Vidyapeeth is the Hindi name for Polyvalent Adult Education Centre.

to undertake an evaluative review of the work of the Shramik Vidyapeeth. A final decision on undertaking such a review and entrusting the work to an independent organization was taken early in December and the work was entrusted to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences at the end of December 1968.

Objectives

In entrusting the evaluative study to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the UNESCO office specified the objectives of the study.

The first objective was to assess the extent and type of planning undertaken by the Vidyapeeth in developing a polyvalent approach. This was sought to be done by a study of Vidyapeeth records of meetings and interviews with staff and policy making personnel. This was also the basis for the assessment of the Vidyapeeth efforts to develop plans to meet specific needs of different groups. For a study of programme operation, a set of ten case-studies covering ten different courses were undertaken. In these studies data were obtained relating to planning, course formulation, participant selection, course management and participant expectations, attitudes and opinions. An effort was also made through rough-and-ready test questions to assess the extent of benefit obtained by the participants. This last was, of course, difficult since the verbal responses of an essentially not-too-well-educated and non-articulate group on technical subjects cannot be wholly satisfactory.

These case studies were also useful in meeting the requirements of an overall evaluation of effectiveness of the programme in terms of its objectives.

Discussion of the possibilities of extending this project to other areas is at best speculative. It is based not on a knowledge of other communities to which the programme could be extended but rather upon certain considerations of where a programme of this type with known strengths and weakness is likely to be useful.

Courses evaluated:

Between July 1967 and December 1968 the Shramik Vidyapeeth had completed about fourteen different courses and had launched upon another five which were to be completed in the first half of 1969. The number of participants in each of these courses varied between 15 to 40. Taking all the fourteen courses together about 750 participants are supposed to have attended them. The number of lectures making up each course varied from 25 to as many as 200.

Of these several courses—completed or underway—the following ten were selected for detailed study :

1. English Language Course, organized for workers of a pharmaceutical concern.
2. Domestic Helpers Course-I, organized at a Nigh School.
3. Domestic Helpers Course-II, organized at a Night School.
4. Home and Family Living Course, organized at a High School in Mahim.
5. Weaving on Auto-Looms Course-I, organized for workers of a textile mill.
6. Weaving on Auto-looms Course-II, organized for workers of the same textile mill.
7. Mechanical Draftsmen's Course, organized in collaboration with a textile trade union organization.
8. Industrial Electricity Course, organized for workers of an electrical goods manufacturing company.
9. Supervisory Skills Course, organized for floor level supervisors of an automobile manufacturing company.
10. Film Projection Course, organised in response to the request of some people in the neighbourhood.

Roughly we may say that the first four courses in the above list belong to the non-technical category or, are at any rate, non-machine based technology whereas the next four are specifically related to machine technology. The ninth course belongs to a category by itself. The course is definitely related to industrial supervision and in this sense it has something in common with courses 5-8, on the other hand the skills sought to be communicated are non-manual skills, which distinguishes it from these courses. Course 10 represents an effort to meet the interests of a group that was otherwise heterogeneous and had no immediate occupational stake in learning the skills that were taught.

Identification of Training Needs

Planning for a course of training begins with identification of a training needs which can be met by the type of programme that an institution can offer. For identifying training needs the Vidyapeeth had undertaken a survey in the working class area, but otherwise it seems to have depended partly on the experience and expertise of its own staff and of the members of its committee of management and partly on the process of writing exploratory letters to industrial establishments.

The course devised by the Vidyapeeth were largely of the 'non-technical' category though the course on Mechanical Draftsmanship cannot be called non-technical and the course on Film Projection may also be considered

technical. But in all these cases the Vidyapeeth staff were placed in the position of having a course for which they had to find a client.

Identification of Cooperating Agency

The situation of having to find an agency that would accept a ready-made course led to some unhappy decisions. The course in Mechanical Draftsmanship which was really suited for persons engaged in engineering industry was organized under the auspices of a textile trade union. The course on domestic help was organized in a night school and half of those enrolled for the course were not engaged in domestic services and those who were so engaged wanted to get out of it. In both these cases the 'agencies' were identified on the basis of their being known to the Vidyapeeth and their being able to provide a physical location and facilities. In one case the number of trainees dropped from 25 to 9 in the first few weeks; in the other the composition of the group kept on changing from time to time.

On the other hand the courses suggested by the employers in response to an exploratory letter from the Vidyapeeth met with greater success. The training need was identified by the employing agency and they were in a position to influence the prospective beneficiary of the programme to enrol himself for the course. If the training succeeded in its objective the trainee as well as his employer benefitted.

This might raise the question of whether the Vidyapeeth should necessarily restrict itself to employer identified training programmes. The answer cannot be categorical, but the logic of the situation in which the Vidyapeeth operates must be appreciated.

Given this situation—characterized by lack of staff and equipment on the one hand and by its goal of providing occupational skills to those in employment—the Vidyapeeth has a very limited choice and area of manoeuvre. They may, of course, undertake special programmes of training on their own so long as the requirements of equipment for these courses are limited and so long as they can identify a sufficiently large goup of potential trainees who are motivated to improve their occupational skills but are not eligible or able to join the fuller training courses. For the present, it appears that these conditions are more easily likely to be met where employers themselves are keen to improve the work skills of certain categories of their workers and invite the Vidyapeeth to organize the training programme.

Involvement of Cooperating Agency

An analysis of the planning process in respect of the ten courses shows that where the courses were conceived of by the Vidyapeeth the cooperative

agencies assumed on the whole a relatively passive role. Two instances will highlight this. The second course on Domestic Help was organized by the Vidyapeeth in a night school. The Principal of the School had, of course, agreed to provide facilities by way of a class-room and even to help enroll students for the course. He probably helped in both these ways. But he did not consider himself as directly involved in the organisation of the course and he had, of course, no stakes in its success or failure.

The textile trade union which cooperated in the organization of the course for Mechanical Draftsman also gave all help by way of physical facilities. In the planning, organization and implementation of the course they played hardly any role. They were actively associated in the slection of trainees, but the selection was faulty and when the trainees dropped off the union authorites seem not to have been of much help—either in keeping up the trainees' motivation or in finding replacements.

The above two paragraphs are not intended as criticism of the cooperating agencies, but rather as an indication of the limited role given to them or accepted by them *vis-a-vis* the training course.

The courses on Industrial Electricity, Auto-looms and Supervisory Skills belonged to a different categroy. Here the training need was identified by the employer and the mnagement was more than marginally interested in the programme. The employer was expected to provide physical facilities and access to technical equipment, but he usually also participated actively and helped in developing the course, in selecting the trainees, in deputing some technical staff for sharing in teaching and in providing transportation facilities for visits. The involvement of the cooperating agency is useful in making the syllabus related to specific needs and indirectly in maintaining the morale of the trainees during the training period.

Syllabus Making

An important aspect of the planning process is the building up of a syllabus. Several factors have to be taken into account while developing a syllabus.

One of these is the level of the trainee, particularly his age and education. The content of the course has to be designed to suit the previous life experience, information level and intellectual discipline that a trainee has attained prior to being admitted to the course. One gathers the impression that the factor was not taken fully into account in the syllabii developed by the Vidyapeeth or it may be that though they were taken into account it was not borne in mind while selecting trainees for the various programmes. Sometimes the variation in the educational background of the trainees in a single course was so great that no teacher could have adequately given satisfaction to the trainees at the two ends of the scale. Middle school

educated individuals and college educated persons sat as trainees in the same class.

Another component in syllabus formulation is the relationship of the syallabus to the life conditions of the trainee. This is particularly important in a general-life-oriented course such as the one on Home and Family Living. Yet this was the one course where the syllabus had the least relationship to the conditions of life of the trainees. The girls who were enrolled for this course came from a section of the urban population which earns the lowest among regular incomes, lives in hutments and temporary structures, and is employed in casual labour of varied types.

Even in technical courses it appears that the educational background of the trainee was not always kept in mind in devising the syllabus. The course on Industrial Electricity which was otherwise one of the more successful courses organised by the Vidyapeeth also suffered from the introduction of subject matter that could not have been comprehended by the trainees.

A third component in the formulation of a syllabus for a short course is to arrive at a minimum size for the sub-units of a course. If you have a training course of a total of 25 lectures you cannot obviously have more than four or five sub-groupings in the syllabus. Or else, the course will appear to be made up of a series of individual lectures that do not easily build up into a whole. The course on Supervisory Skills consisted of 40 lectures grouped into seventeen sub-units. This inevitably led to a generalised treatment of the subject matter by individual teachers. This was true of other courses too. The Vidyapeeth may have to re-examine its policy relating to course building from this point of view.

A different kind of problem, but in a sense a very important one for the educational philosophy of the Vidyapeeth, was the problem of weaving 'General Education' into its various courses. The aim in introducing this 'general' or 'non-specialists' element in the courses was to make the course more rounded and to offer the workers a many sided or polyvalent education. Under the best of conditions this is a difficult aim to achieve but when 'General Education' often takes the form of telling the workers the do's and the don'ts of every day life it becomes more difficult to harmonize General Educational with courses on technical industrial skills.

The lectures on General Education were few and were not assimilated to the major objectives and organization of the courses. If these lectures are really intended to make an impact and not appear as distracting rather than harmonizing bits of information or advice they should be given more space in the syllabus. It may even be that instead of lecturing on some of these subjects it will be more useful to show workers films on them. In any case a polyvalent approach demands teachers with a much greater creative ability than seems to have been available to the Vidyapeeth.

Course Organization

The term course organization is here used to cover a number of the somewhat routine chores of time-table making, co-ordination of instructional activities and supervision. In these areas there seemed to be a distinct difference between those courses organized directly by the Vidyapeeth and those organized in collaboration with other agencies. The collaboratively organised courses such as those in Auto-loom Weaving, Industrial Electricity and Supervisory Skills were definitely better organized and supervised. The classes were held regularly, the lectures which were scheduled to be delivered were delivered as planned, the lecture notes were duly distributed and the visits where planned usually took place. The syllabii for these courses were also more systematically developed. The other courses, with the exception of the course on Mechanical Draftsmanship, had an element of uncertainty and *ad hoc* movement.

III

TEACHERS

An aspect of course organization, is the selection of persons to teach a course and their effective involvement in the programme. It was mentioned above that by the very nature of its organization the Vidyapeeth could not be expected to retain a large and varied full-time staff of teachers who would be qualified to teach each one of its many courses. The Vidyapeeth is expected to have a nucleus of staff that can take initative in identifying needs for new courses and in setting them up.

Normally in a city of the size of Bombay with its many educational and training institution there should be no difficulty about finding suitable teachers. But most of these teachers—especially those teaching technical subjects—are engaged in teaching courses which are open only to students who have completed their secondary school education. They do not have experience of teaching middle school passed and sometimes barely literate worker-trainees.

The Vidyapeeth sought to meet this problem by enlisting the support of teachers from the Industrial Training Institutes and the support of the middle level supervisory staff of the employing agency for whom the course was conducted. This last was, on the whole, a good strategy—by selecting a local person as a teacher the Vidyapeeth could ensure the greater involvement of the co-operating agency, could be assured of the greater likelihood of the class lesson being related to the actual work situation of the trainee and could also be more certain of the regularity in attendence of the teacher who being a local person did not have to travel long distances to reach the class-room.

The choice of teachers for the non-technical courses was less satisfactory. It appears that at least for the courses on Domestic Help and Home and Family Living the teachers were not carefully selected. In the case of one of the teachers in the latter course it was seen that the teacher was herself misinformed about her subject.

The teacher teaching General Education classes had the major responsibility for providing the polyvalent component to the training programme but she could not obviously cope with the demand for providing a meaningful set of lectures to varied groups of trainees with very different levels of education and work experience.

The extent of participation of teachers in course formulation and organization also varied a great deal. The teachers from employing agencies and particularly those who were heads of departments at one of the cooperating agencies like the Industrial Training Institute or the Audio-visual Institute had a greater participation in course formulation than other teachers. In some cases the teachers said they thought the course drafted for their subject was either too avanced or not sufficiently related to the work background of the trainees.

The non-involvement of teachers in the selection of trainees also tends to define their attitudes to the trainees. As will be seen later, there was probably little that the Vidyapeeth could have done to change or improve the educational background of the trainees, but if the teacher had been involved in the process of selection they might have appreciated better the problems of finding trainees with the apporpriate educational background.

Another impression that one gathered from interviews with teachers was their general unfamiliarity or ignorance about the Vidyapeeth, its organization and its special approach to education. No efforts seems to have been made to acquaint the teachers either with the factual background or with the philosophy of the Vidyapeeth. Unless the Vidyapeeth teaches them either individually or in groups it is unlikely that they could become effective instruments of the new approach sought to be developed by the Vidyapeeth.

IV

PARTICIPANTS

Selection of Participants

In the selection of participants, there is a clear difference in procedure between the course organized by the Vidyapeeth on its own initiative and those organized by it in collaboration with an employer. In the former case the Vidyapeeth seemed to be at a loss to identify a channel through which potential trainees could be identified and recruited. In none of these

courses with the exception of the course on Mechanical Draftsmanship, does the Vidyapeeth have an exact record of the number of individuals who applied for admissions. Probably the number of applications was not larger than the number who were admiited. In such a situation there could not have been much scope for 'selection' of trainees.

That this should be so is not surprising for a newly established programme, but if the Vidyapeeth activities have to get known the Vidyapeeth will have to make conscious efforts to contact agencies and groups which are likely to provide its potential trainees and, in addition use the hospitality of available *mass media* for publicity of its work and programmes.

The selection of trainees for technical courses which were organized in co-operation with employers followed a different procedure for selection. Here the initiative rested largely with the management. The managements in each case notified the course through display of a notice on the board and through circulation to various departments. In one case, as in the the course on Industrial Electricity, the Administrative Officer personally canvassed for the course and helped select a group of trainees.

But even in courses organized with the help of employer the criteria laid down for admission to the course had to be relaxed in the case of some of the participants.

Background of Participants

An examination of the social background characteristics of the participants shows that they were drawn from a fairly wide range of income and education—some of them came from homes with illiterate fathers engaged in unskilled occupations, some from the urban skilled worker groups, some from the lower middle class, white collared homes and a few from educated professional groups.

It would not be surprising if such variation was to be noticed between trainees enrolled for different courses. But more important than inter-group variations between trainees of different courses are the intra group vairations among trainees of the same course. In the English Language course there were trainees with no formal education and other who had completed high school. In the group attending the course on Supervisory Skills there were individuals who had passed middle school and some who were college graduates. In the various industrial skills' courses the variations were not as wide, but they were wide enough to present a problem to teachers.

While intra-group variations are problematic for course organization and instructions, the inter-group variations also have certain implications for programme planning. The more varied the groups and occupations for which the courses are to be planned the greater is the planning and

course formulation effort required of the staff. In the fourteen courses organized during the first year of operation the Vidyapeet had sought to serve ten different occupational groups. It is open to question whether this was the best strategy for deployment of staff resources.

Motivation

Despite difficulties involved in analysing data on motives it is clear that most participants, joined the course that they did because they expected that the course would, in some way, help in promoting their occupational careers. This was particularly true in respect of courses organized in factory premises with the help of employers. It is true that as a rule neither employers nor the Vidyapeeth made any promise of promotion or job betterment to the trainees who enrolled for the courses: the trainees admitted this. Even so, in an indirect way, they expected the course to help them in improving their positions or emoluments or both.

Among the trainees of employer-sponsored course there were, of course, some who joined because they had been asked or persuaded by management to undergo courses. In some cases to be selected to undergo a course might itself have appeared as a reward to workers but since the participation in the course usually did not entitle a worker to special facilities even in terms of shift allocation or time off work, this feeling of reward in being selected for the course must have been limited.

There was a third group of workers who said that they were aware of other similar courses in the city but they chose this one because they were not required to pay fees and also because they did not have to spend time specially on transportation to a place away both from their home and work.

Even in courses organized directly by the Vidyapeeth under its own auspices the employment-oriented motive was not absent, but in joining these courses the worker was making a somewhat different kind of decision. He did not necessarily expect an improvement in his job status in the particular institution or company in which he was working In some cases the course was not even related to the type of work he was doing.

There is thus considerable variation in the factors that motivate individuals to join the types of courses offered by the Vidyapeeth. This variation would also imply a difference in what may seem worthwhile and satisfying to different trainees. Some may consider the course to have been a failure in so far as it does not help them in their occupational life; others may be looking for some useful 'extramural' activity which is not related to their jobs and they may judge a course useful if it provides them such activity. It is of course also possible that the same individual has both types of expectations and he may consider the course successful in terms of one expectation and a failure in terms of another. This last possibility may

well explain some of the apparently contradictory response of the participants to different questions.

Attitudes and Opinions

Several questions were asked to the participants to find out directly and indirectly their attitude to the course. They were asked whether they liked the subjects taught to them, whether they found them useful, whether they would be willing to join similar courses organized by the Vidyapeeth and whether they would be willing to pay fees. If one is to make an overall judgment based upon the responses one would say that the participants had generally a very favourable attitude to the course they attended. They liked the subjects taught to them (except in some cases, the general knowledge course which they found irrelevant to their work), they were willing to join other similar courses and were even willing to pay fees for being allowed to attend the courses.

One of the things the trainees disliked most was for a course to be left incomplete as happened in the case of the course on English Language, the course on Home and Family Living and one of the courses on Domestic Help. The trainees also felt, the duration of some of the course was not adequate and often the lecturers could deal with only very briefly the subject they discussed. In one case the non-appearance of the teacher and the last-minute cancellation of classes was also resented.

Another way of looking at the course is to look at the number of drop-outs. In three or four courses almost one-third of the trainees did not complete the courses. If it cannot be said that each drop out was due to the trainees' dissatisfaction with the course, it is permissible to interpret it as the inability of the course to hold his interest, over a period of time.

The fact that a majority of trainees in most courses expressed their willingness to pay fees is heartening. It shows that there is a genuine desire to seek to improve one's knowledge and skills among the trainees. Many of them said that they might not have joined the course if they had initially been required to pay; but at the end of the course they were willing to pay fees.

Knowledge Gain

How much did the trainees actually learn and retain of what they had learnt? It was obviously not possible for the evaluation team to test each trainee on his job and see whether he knew it well and better than his colleagues who had not undergone the course. What was done, instead, was to give a verbal test to each trainee on the portions covered in his course, to find out how much he knew or had retained of what he had been taught.

The results of the tests were satisfactory for four courses viz., the course in Mechanical Draftsmanship, Industrial Electricity, the first course on Auto-loom Weaving, and the course on Domestic Help. In the other courses the results were average or unsatisfactory. In these latter courses more than half the trainees failed to pass the test even at the 33 per cent marks level.

Where it was possible to compare the performance of the trainees with a matched group of non-trainees it was generally found that the trainees did better than the non-trainees.

V

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

An effort was made to give an overall grade to each of the courses based upon the extent of careful planning, the efficiency of organization, the response tone and performance of the trainees and the remarks of the investigators. This assessment is qualitative and not based on statistical indices, but it is offered as a base for an overall assessment of the work of the Vidyapeeth in the first year.

Name of Course	*Assessment*
1. English Language	C
2. Home and Family Living	C
3. Domestic Help— I	C
4. Domestic Help II Incomplete	—
5. Mechanical Draftsmanship	B
6. Industrial Electricity	B
7. Auto-loom —I	B
8. Auto-loom —II	B
9. Supervisory Skills	B
10. Film Projection	C

It may be said that about half the courses were reasonably well organized and the other half were poorly organized. Since one of the purposes of an evaluative study is to identify shortcomings that can be rectified it may be worthwhile to seek to understand some of the specific factors accounting for poor results.

One of these factors was obviously lack of careful planning. In most of the courses that were marked 'Poor' there was no clear purpose behind undertaking the courses. No study had been undertaken to find out the exact need that was sought to be met and the group that was to be served. Even the syllabii were not properly developed. It was vaguely perceived that housewives and domestic servants could be helped in their work by giving them more knowledge about cooking, nutrition, etc. But beyond this everything was left uncertain.

The same *ad hoc* approach characterized the course for domestic servants. A course for domestic servants to be fruitful must involve the housewives with whom the servants are working. The Vidyapeeth was only anxious about locating a group of house servants who would be reguarly available at one place. In this anxiety the housewife was left out of the picture and even the question about whether the boys were/all engaged in domestic work was not always asked.

The factors responsible for this lack of planning and supervision were several. One of the important factors seems to have been the complete lack of experience in this kind of work on the part of the staff of the Vidyapeeth.

The UNESCO adviser and the department staff of the Adult Education Department of the NCERT did pay periodic visits. The UNESCO adviser also gave detailed help on the planning process; but it does seem that the results would have been more satisfactory if the adviser could have been located in Bombay to serve as consultant to the Principal of the Vidyapeeth than being located in New Delhi to serve as a consultant to the NCERT.

The staff was not only inexperienced but also numerically inadequate for the purpose of organizing fourteen different courses in as many months. It is true that the Vidyapeeth staff did not have to directly teach all the courses, but they were expected to supervise and coordinate all of them. It is possible that once a programme is well established a staff of three can coordinate about six programmes at one time and still find time to do advance planning for newer courses. The Vidyapeeth, however, had still to find its feet; the courses to be devised were new and the guest-teachers suitable for the programmes had yet to be identified.

Besides, the Vidyapeeth staff never all seemed to be in position at the same time. Though a compliment of staff consisting of three persons was sanctioned, not more than two were on the staff at the same time. At the same time they felt themselves under direct and indirect pressure to show activity, and results. This could not but lead to improper and unplanned courses being undertaken.

The courses which were relatively well organized were characterized by two factors. They were all courses in the area of technical skills where the substantive educational content was relatively concret. The teachers and the taught were both aware of the specific objectives of the course. Additionally, most of these courses were organized in response to an employer's request and with his cooperation. The availability of a homogeneous, semi-organized group was a great advantage.

Despite this the courses suffered from a lack of proper planning. The syllabus makers seemed to have been caught in the dilemma of making the

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course practice-oriented and yet at the same time reaching some level of academic comparability with courses run by the Industrial Training Institutes and courses otherwise prescribed by government for specific industrial trades. This is a point on which the Vidyapeeth and the employers must attain a common perspective. In its absence, the employers are likely to find the courses 'too theoretical, and the teachers and organizers to find them too limiting.

A point of discussion common to both the technical as well as the non-technical courses is the one about the effectiveness of the polyvalent approach. Very early in the study it became clear that there was a lack of clarity among the staff and the members of the Vidyapeeth generally about the exact meaning and practice implications of the term 'polyvalent'. As mentioned earlier the idea was discussed at length in Delhi, among NCERT officials and also among experts in a study group. The staff of the Vidyapeeth, however, were not participants in any of these discussions.

The term 'polyvalent' could be used with reference to an individual course as well as to the total activities of an educational centre. If the word is used with reference to the centre as a whole the meaning is simple: it only refers to the fact that the centre offers not one course, but several courses which between them cover different aspects of lifework life, home life, leisure, recreation, etc. But if the term is applied to an individual course it suggests that every course should seek to provide instruction on many different aspects of life. In this latter sense the term is difficult to understand and even more difficult to practise. How exactly can we teach a course on electricity in a polyvalent way or for that matter a course on trailoring?

From the discussions with the UNESCO expert it appeared that when a polyvalent centre undertakes a programme of education with a group of workers it uses formal as well as informal processes of education. They arrange film shows, exhibitions, workers-discussions, etc. outside the work hours, during lunch-intervals and between shifts. He gave instances of informal programmes for developing appreciations of visual art and music, film discussion groups and groups for discussing books. This is very different from giving four or five lectures on health, safety or law to an unmotivated, captive audience which feels itself imposed upon when they have to listen to anything not directly related to their job. This also calls for a different scale of endeavour than seems possible to undertake with a small unit of three teachers.

At any rate it is difficult to assert seriously that the polyvalent approach has been given a trial through the activities of the Vidyapeeth and it is therefore pointless to seek to evaluate the approach. What the Vidyapeeth has sought to do is to offer job-courses to people in employment who cannot for reasons of time, money oriented inadequate education benefit form the

regular full-time or part-time courses available in the community. This, in itself, is worth doing and has not been attempted so far.

VI

SUGGESTIONS

This section lists a few suggestions for improving the programmes of the Shramik Vidyapeeth. The suggestions follow from the discussion in the previous sections.

Careful Planning

The first suggestion is obviously the one relating to planning of training courses. There is need to ensure that every course that the Vidyapeeth undertakes is carefully planned. Such planning would involve the identification of a clear training need and a group with reference to which the need is to be met: planning also implies a detailed division of the subject area into sub-units and the allocation of sub-units to teachers. No sub-unit should be less than five lecture hours in duration and no sub-unit should be taught by more than one teacher.

It would be useful for the Vidyapeeth to have on its full-time staff one educationist who has experience and training in developing syallbii and courses.

The course formulation must be done with the help of the best qualified experts in the field. They should be paid honoraria for their assistance. In fact the courses and the detailed lessons developed by experts may even bear their names. This will encourage them to take their advisory responsibility seriously. The syllabii should be finalised by a Committee on which the Vidyapeeth as well as management of industrial units work together.

In this planning process the potential teachers as well as the cooperating agency should be invited to participate. In so far as a programme is planned following a request from an agency the participation by the agency may follow in normal course. But it is equally important to involve teachers in planning a course. This will ensure not only that their point of view is listened to but also that they have a chance to acquaint themselves with the major objectives of the programme. They will thus know where their particular part or contribution fits into the broader design.

Initial Emphasis

If such detailed planning is to be possible it is obvious that for some time the Vidyapeeth should plan not more than about eight-to-ten courses a year unless it has a larger staff. To begin with it may be best to restrict

the courses to needs identified by organised industry. Past experience indicates that these courses are on the whole more fruitful than others.

This suggestion may meet with one general objection. Is it right for the Vidyapeeth to utilize its resources for meeting needs of an industry which can well take care of its own training needs. The answers to this objection are two. One is that, in the short run, this is the best way of ensuring maximum utilization of Vidyapeeth resources. It will also serve to provide much needed organizational experience to the Vidyapeeth staff. The industrial units for which training is undertaken should be requested to pay part of the cost of training programme.

Secondly, the suggestion is made only as an initial measure. It is important that at the end of another year or two the Vidyapeeth should develop courses to meet the needs of persons engaged in small industry, in shops and establishments, and in domestic employment. Courses may also have to be developed to meet the needs of self-employed artisans and craftsmen.

This calls for the employment of a somewhat larger and more varied staff. Each staff member will have to develop expertise in half-a-dozen areas and if the Vidyapeeth has a nucleus of 5-6 staff members they can between them extend the services of the Vidyapeeth at least three or four-fold.

If the Vidyapeeth is to organize courses on its own it must develop a liaison with other agencies in different parts of the city so that they can borrow the use of their physical facilities. But in arriving at these arrangements it is important that the objectives for which the programme or programmes are organized should be kept firmly in view. While the co-operating agency might help in every way the overall responsibility for supervising the course must remain with the Vidyapeeth.

Course Units and Government Recognition

As the Vidyapeeth develops its new courses it may examine the possibility of developing unit courses which over a period of time can enable a worker to qualify for certificates and diplomas instituted by the State Government. This need not be in the same areas in which the Industrial Training Institutes are operative. This may not be very easy either since technical training on machines calls for heavy capital expenditure. There is, however, the possibility that employers may be willing to offer use of their workshop facilities for training their own employees. At any rate this should be explored.

Apart from such high cost training projects, however, there are others in secretarial work, shop attendance, tailoring, laundrying, etc. that could be developed by the Vidyapeeth with relatively small investments. The

Vidyapeeth can explore and develop this area. At present there are few systematic opportunities available for persons who wish to enter into such careers. There is also obviously a demand for courses in English. The Vidyapeeth could develop them and offer them independently or as parts of other courses to workers.

It may be good to charge a small fee to workers who enroll as trainees in a course—This may be particularly useful where the course is organized outside a factory and is open to all who wish to join. This ensures seriousness, regularity and motivation to learn.

Selection of Teachers

The Vidyapeeth must exercise considerable care in the selection of teachers for the various courses. They must choose teachers with the ability to communicate with trainees who have barely middle school education and yet they must know their subjects well. Persons with good knowledge of technical subjects are all college and university graduates and often have difficulty in expressing themselves in these subjects in the local Indian language or in Hindi. The Vidyapeeth may have to gradually and systematically build up groups of teachers in different subject areas who have the necessary knowledge, the required communication skills and an identification with the over-all objectives of continued education for workers.

Selection of Trainees

The selection of trainees is another area where greater care and clarity are required. The specific target group must be identified in terms of age, work-experience and educational background. It is fruitless to enroll persons who have neither the experience nor the motivation for serious involvement in a particular course. It would be desirable to associate managements and trade unions in the selection of trainees for courses in industrial skills. A small number of trainees may be preferable to a motley group that is brought together to complete the required quota for a course. Simultaneously efforts must be made to make a course widely known, and well ahead of time, so that persons who are likely to benefit by particular programmes get to know of the opportunity offered by the Vidyapeeth.

Establishment of Vidyapeeth at New Centres

It should be obvious from the over-all assessment as well as the suggestions made above that it is our view that the experiment of the Shramik Vidyapeeth can be considered to have met with a moderate success. It would be worthwhile to make the effort to improve it and extend it.

In extending the work to places other than Bombay the NCERT

may choose the locations with primarily two factors in mind—the existence of a labour force which can benefit by short term, work-oriented courses that do not necessarily add to the formal qualifications of worker and the availability of qualified technical personnel that can serve as a pool of potential teachers for the Vidyapeeth. It is, of course, true that polyvalent education as a concept can be extended even to rural areas but then the work of carrying the new technology to the practising farmer is probably already being tackled by extension services of the government. The need for organizing systematised training for workers is particularly great in industry and the location of polyvalent centres in the urban, industrial areas will at least partially meet this need.

This is a summary of the report of an evaluative study of Polyvalent Adult Education Centre, Bombay, made by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Chembur, Bombay in 1969 under contract with UNESCO.

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